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Final Course Project: How Adults Learn

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Abstract

Adults learn simply through life experience and possibly by pursuing an education. Pursuing an education would depend on the setting of the experience. This project aimed to explore the theories and frameworks that inform the field of adult learning today. A course project was constructed of seven individual projects, each exploring different aspects of how adults learn. A literature review was conducted to determine their relevance in the study. Analysis revealed that research supported the theories and frameworks of how adults learn.

Synthesis of Learning Theories

This final course project, How Adults Learn, comprises seven projects. Each project

entails how adults learn. In this paper, Synthesis of Learning Theories, I explained what learning

theories resonated with me. I discussed what adult learning theories were most and least

applicable to me for learning. I also discussed how I learned as an adult learner and what

theories supported and disfavored this experience.

Synthesis

Adult learning theories that resonated well with me included community of inquiry and

connectivism. Community of inquiry involves generating cognitive, social, and teaching

presences online (Garrison, 2017). This theory involves four phases of inquiry, including a

triggering event, exploration, integration, and resolution (Garrison, 2017). An individual can

have an experience that leaves them bewildered. They can research how to make sense of the

problem and integrate the research to understand the situation. The mystery is usually solved,

and the student can then apply this information to the problem. One example is when I research

family genealogy and find a document that needs investigation. After reading the document, I

tend to have solved the mystery.

Connectivism is learning that involves what information is available through the digital

age, such as a television, the internet, and iPhones (Siemens, 2005). Siemens (2005) explained

that students and teachers must judge the information quickly to decide its significance.

Although the information may be correct when retrieved, it may be outdated due to alterations in

the information environment affecting the decision (Siemens, 2005). One example is when my

job requires me to find updated math worksheets to help my students learn. Sometimes I need to

research and verify that this information has been updated. When I am satisfied that this information is updated and would help my students, I make copies and issue them.

Adult learning theories that are the most applicable to me include collaborativism, adult learning theory, workplace learning, and theorized learning. Collaborativism is based on collaborative learning that involves positive mutual dependency, personal accountability, promoting interaction, social skills, and group processes (Magen-Nagar & Shonfeld, 2018). Online discourse can occur through texting, chat, forums, webinars, e-mails, and blogs. An example includes the daily use of Facebook, our iPhones, and our university's online sites. Adult learning theory is focused on the individual learner, how the learner processes information, and how learning enables the individual to become more empowered and independent (Merriam, 2008). Another example is how adults have learned to read and understand continuously to prepare themselves better. Workplace learning involves the interconnections of humans and their actions with rules, tools and texts, cultural and material environments (Merriam, 2008). An example includes how my department of education co-workers continuously work together to create a safe environment for the staff and inmates and to use this to effectively teach inmates. Theorized learning involves making stories of our lives to give meaning to our experiences (Merriam, 2008). One example is when these inmates must write diaries for the department of psychology of what they have learned of their mistakes and how to improve upon them.

Adult learning theories that are the least applicable to me include transformational learning. According to Mezirow (2008), adults can see distortions in their beliefs, feelings, and attitudes. This theory is inappropriate for me as I do not experience distortions to learn. Tisdell's (2008) spirituality and learning explained that spiritual development often involves cultural heritage. This theory is also inappropriate for me as I do not use my heritage to learn.

Tygel and Kirsch (2016) recognized the relationship with the universe, planets, the natural environment, human community, and the personal world with learning. This theory is inappropriate for me as I am not a spiritual person. My way of learning involves reading from printed material to take notes, underline, or highlight what is important to me. I can always refer to it anytime I need to. The material must make sense to me so that I can understand it. I have also found that taking online courses is best for me as I can learn at my own pace and refer to all the printed material at any time. An example of this is connectivism, where learning is done through the digital age (Siemens, 2005). I can learn better when the media can be made available so that I can refer to it anytime I need it.

Community of Inquiry (Garrison, 2017) supports my learning method involving a cognitive presence. An example was when I explored the literature for my dissertation and constructed what I needed to explain my problem statement. I would resolute and confirm my understanding through online learning collaboration with my classmates and chair.

Reflection

Through all the readings for this course, I have learned that various learning theories could explain why certain inmates may learn at a certain level or speed. As an education specialist at an all-male prison, I have known that after teaching a group of inmates the same way, I may have to deal with each inmate separately when it comes to an understanding of how they learn and how to teach each of them. One example is using community of inquiry (Garrison, 2017) to decide what areas of their learning need more focus. I may need to spend more time with more models to get the point across.

The only technology teachers can use in the classroom at some federal prisons is the television in their cell houses. Inmates can watch television daily by connectivism, where they

learn the news in the digital age (Siemens, 2005). Inmates are constantly asking teachers if we

have heard any updates on current affairs.

      The best way to use the adult learning theory (Merriam, 2008) is to improve our

instruction by spending more time with the inmates and becoming more detailed about providing

the education. Teachers can only use a whiteboard, dry erase markers, pens and pencils, folders,

scrap paper, and copies of the GED subject books. I could also become more familiar with adult

learning theories to see which views are more applicable to the inmates. There are times when

being more detailed with the subject matter is not enough.

      Some of these inmates would then have to be taken out of the GED class and moved into

a Special Learning Needs teacher. Some of these inmates are religious and participate in

religious programs. They may be more involved in spiritual and learning (Merriam, 2008),

learning by cultural heritage.

Adult Development and Learning

In this paper, the three perspectives of aging, including biological, psychological, and sociocultural, will be discussed in its relationship to learning. I describe myself in terms of biological aging. I discuss how the psychological model of development impacts how I learn. I consider how social and emotional worlds influence my learning. I examine how my intelligence results from biology, environment, and experiences.

Synthesis

How an adult learns can depend on the biological changes throughout their lifespan. According to Merriam and Baumgartner (2020), adult learning development includes psychological and biological factors that can occur during the lifespan of an adult. I noticed some significant changes in my body after separating from the military. I realized these changes when the doctors informed me that I was a type 2 diabetic. I did know what diabetes was but was not informed enough to know how to take care of it. I learned the hard way that being a diabetic meant that I needed to make sure that my blood sugar was high enough to continue living and working without worrying about stopping to make changes. To better prepare myself, I kept enough fruit juice with me in case my blood sugar began to drop. Another biological change adults can also experience is a hearing loss later in life (Davis et al., 2016). I recall my family getting irritated when I continuously asked them to repeat themselves. A visit to the doctors revealed I needed hearing aids for both ears. Finally, vision is another way for adults to experience changes as they get older. My vision has worsened as I need eyeglasses for reading up close (Harsen, 2009; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Another perspective for adults to learn would depend on their psychological changes. These changes would depend on an adult's internal process of development (Merriam &

Baumgartner, 2020). In my early adulthood, I began feeling issues with identity vs. role

confusion (Erikson, 1963). I had problems dealing with what I was or was not allowed to do at

home. I grew up with parents who were what I felt were very protective. I then decided to wait

until I was entirely out of the house to make my own decisions about life. During this same

time, I was having issues with intimacy vs. isolation (Erikson, 1963), where I was trying to

decide what was best for me, being with someone or staying alone. In my middle adulthood, I

am currently having issues with generativity vs. stagnation (Erikson, 1963; Malone et al., 2016).

I am trying to determine what I feel I should do with the rest of my life. I wanted to make the

best impact for myself and do what I could to help others. I went back to school and earned my

master's in teaching and a doctorate in education. As a GED teacher at a prison, some inmate

students may have little empathy for other inmates who are not attending GED classes. Those

inmates who were not in school resisted GED materials, finding them irrelevant (Lineros &

Fincher, 2014).

Another psychological change involves Levinson's Age-Graded Model (Levinson &

Levinson, 1996). Levinson and Levinson (1996) stated that people evolve through an orderly

sequence of stable and transitional periods that correlate with chronological age. In my previous

years, I have experienced many family losses, have had many occupations, have formed and still

have many friendships. I disagree partially with Helms's (2008) model of White racial identity.

Through my genealogical research, I am supposed to be biracial with a small portion of Black. I

therefore only associate myself with being White but do indicate a non-racist identity.

The sociocultural perspective suggests that the way an adult develops would depend on

how that person reacts to any social role enforced upon that person at any time in their life

(Bjorklund, 2016). My first social role in my early adulthood involved joining the Air Force and

enrolling in the G.I. Bill. Before joining the Air Force, I already had an undergraduate degree and planned to eventually go to graduate and doctoral school. I would have to finish my first enlistment honorably and use this bill. My second social role involved purchasing my first home with my first mortgage. My third social role, in middle adulthood, was becoming a professional student, earning my master's and doctorate degrees (Bjorklund, 2016). Currently, my social role is working as a teacher. Becoming a teacher did not occur in a traditional primary or secondary school. This transition happened in a federal all-male prison where I teach GED to inmates who do not have a GED or a high school diploma. Socially constructed notions of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation had no impact on my personal development or learning. I have no issues with racism, regardless of my ancestral background (Wijeyesinghe, 2012). As I have no racism issues, I do not worry about the opinions of others or how they may impact my way of learning (Wijeyesenghe & Jackson, 2012). I see learning as an opportunity to adjust to what is happening in society and take what I can as long as it does not cause any problems for me (Wijeyesenge & Jackson, 2012).

I cannot entirely agree with the notion that intelligence is biology related. Only a few of my immediate family members completed high school but did not attend college. It was not until high school that I wanted more for myself, and college was the answer. My high school-educated parents put me through undergraduate school. I woke up and realized what I could do to prepare myself for college and eventually earned my master's and a doctorate on my own. Through my experience, I found that the environment and personal experience can contribute to intelligence. I grew up in a town where college was a big deal, whether you could afford it or not. Every county has a community college and a college or university throughout the state.

Reflection

When working with new inmate students, I need to realize that they bring all types of different backgrounds with them. They each have developed the perspectives that will allow them to learn personally. To work with them effectively, I would need to interview them or talk to them as a group to determine which social roles they previously had, what these roles taught them, and see if they would like to experience those roles again. I can become more familiar with these perspectives of learning theories to see how I can use them to prepare them better to become more successful. I can ask my students how I can make it easier for them to learn in the classroom. For example, use darker dry erase markers and write bigger on the board (Jefferson, 2017). I can slow down to explain a math problem (Jefferson, 2017). I can provide a job the inmates may love to do in the education department (Bjorklund, 2016). I have some inmates who have been working in the library for a few months for almost nothing as long as they have something to do. We have been rearranging the library to make it easier to incorporate more books and make learning more fun. They love the idea of being out of the cell house and just being able to do something to improve the library. Each inmate does a specific job or helps the others. They love providing a service even though they are not getting paid or paid very little. They are learning a great skill in library science. I explain what they must do, and then I leave them alone. We have gotten along since we started. I have created and displayed several library terms with their definitions around the library so that inmates can increase their literacy skills (Malone et al., 2016).

Wisdom

In this paper, I consider what wisdom is and how its definition has changed throughout my life. I discuss who I think has been wise to me over the years and how. I deliberate what opportunities I experienced with those I consider wise to me. I summarize how the following bullet statements made me feel as an educator. I also summarize my perspectives on the source and definition of wisdom.

New Directions and Discoveries

After reading the bullet statements from New Directions and Discoveries (Merriam et al., 2007), I automatically felt intimidated, ashamed, overwhelmed, and challenged by the wording of the information and the questions asked of me. I consider myself highly educated, with three degrees, including a doctorate. Though I recently earned my doctorate, I still feel that I am new at understanding what is required in the academic field. Even though I am accustomed to being challenged in this way of understanding the passages, there are times when I need to update myself by conducting more research.

After reading the bullet statements, I found myself rereading the listing to make sure I understood what was asked of me. The information was worded to make me feel that I would need to research more to understand some of the terminologies and what the passage was asking of me (Laureate Education, 2011b). I then found myself jotting down notes to determine what I would say and how I was to say it.

Though I am of advanced age, have had many occupations over the years, am highly educated, and have worked with many progressive individuals, I consider myself wise (Laureate Education, 2011b; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). It amazes me how advanced some of us think we are. Still, I feel that we should continue to educate ourselves to stay above what is

required of us to help others advance themselves. I know how some inmate students may approach some assignments and have the same problems as I had to determine how to tackle projects.

Wisdom and Learning

I have considered two groups of people as being wise all my life, my stepparents and my step-grandparents. My brother and I were raised by my stepparents, my two mothers. Both parents are not biologically related in any way to each other but have known each other for years. My biological parents eventually gave my brother and me up for custody to our stepparents. One of my stepparents is my biological aunt, my father's half-sister. The other parent has no blood with us. My aunt is a military veteran and retired from A.A.A. as an accountant. My other stepparent did work until she had to retire from a medical mishap. My stepparents had never been parents and so had to learn how to raise us from scratch (Laureate Education, 2011a). In growing up, my brother and I never got into big trouble, were never arrested or jailed, or were never involved in drugs or alcohol. My stepparents never talked about their finances, so we always thought all was well and never had to worry about money. My stepparents are high school graduates, but they never attended college. Our stepparents asked us if we wanted to attend college. I, of course, said yes, but my brother wanted vocational training; we both eventually graduated. My aunt is now elderly, and my other stepmother has passed on. I eventually moved in with my aunt. This move has helped each of us out financially and emotionally.

Since a student in grade school, I spent a significant amount of time with my step-grandparents, helping them with choirs around their house while staying there on some weekends. My step-grandparents are the parents of my stepmother of no blood. My brother and

I also grew up with our step-grandparents when they needed our help with choirs over the years; this was considered our second home. My step-grandparents were constantly advising us on how to do things, what to do and what not to do (Laureate Education, 2011b).

My wisdom has grown in several ways. I realized that I had gained wisdom when I first separated honorably from the military. Having spent twelve years on active duty, I have lived on some military stations. I have learned how to live at these various places and conduct myself responsibly (Laureate Education, 2011b).

My wisdom continued to grow as I separated from the military (Laureate Education, 2011b). I became a civilian then became employed at the military base I separated from. Soon after, I bought my first home, which was a condo unit, with my first mortgage. I then realized that I needed to use my G.I. Bill towards my master's degree. I applied for and got accepted into a master's program in Teaching Science Education at a university about a block away. I continued this program while working at my employment at the base. About less than a year after completing my MAT degree, I applied for and began my Doctor of Education. Unfortunately, a few years after, I was faced with a horrifying realization that I was given a two-month notice of being laid off. My life continued with having to move to where I am currently living. I finally finished my doctorate and am now in the process of leaving my current job to continue in the adult education field.

With what I have learned and experienced over the years, I understand how wisdom and learning are related. To have insight, one must also have gained an education and helped others with their situations. Each of us has our own experiences, whether it involves having different occupations, working with various people, gaining an education, or experiencing the good and the bad (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). This all leads up to gaining wisdom. Wisdom is all

about the knowledge, memory, good feelings, caring, and compassion involved with knowing yourself and others.

For as long as I continue to be an educator, I will always be available to opportunities to learn and help others learn. For me, being an educator means continuously being on the outlook for updated information to improve myself and those that I hope to influence. I also care about helping students see what is expected of them in the future and how they should do the same for others.

Self-Report and Interview

In this paper, I compare and contrast a movie's lead character's learning to that of my learning. I describe my learning as one of the learning models. I also describe the three learning models in my life.

Self-Report

In the movie Forrest Gump, Forrest exhibited learning by using all three adult learning models. Forrest experienced transformational learning, learning that causes a change in the way we see ourselves and the world we live in (Kegan, 2000), when he was affected by polio as a boy. When some of his classmates bullied him, he somehow was able to run and eventually run out of his leg braces. This running helped him play football during his college years and run across America towards the end of the movie. When his girlfriend, Jenny, left him, Forrest learned how to deal with life independently when he joined the Army and took over the shrimp business. When his mother died, he decided to stay at his mother's house. He cut his grass and the grass for his alma mater, the University of Alabama. When his best friend, Bubba, died, Lt. Dan joined Forrest on the shrimp boat. Forrest eventually became the boat's captain. Forrest made a lot of money and shared the profit with Bubba's mother.

Forrest experienced experiential learning; learners used their vast number of experiences towards learning (Kolb, 1984) when he went into the Army. Forrest learned how to take care of himself and his platoon. He rescued his platoon from the gun fighting, saving their lives. Forrest also used his life skills when he continued to live with the help of Lt. Dan.

Forrest also experienced self-directed learning, well intentional efforts to learn all around you (Tough, 1971), when he became the shrimp boat captain. With the help of Lt. Dan, he was

able to predict somewhat where the shrimp was plentiful, especially after a big storm. He was able to continue this business long enough to make some money.

Like Forrest Gump, I also experienced transformational learning. I have lost some family members, my grandparents, my biological mother, and my only sibling. It took me a while to emotionally get through this and carry on with my life. My transformational learning is also medically related. It was not until after being separated from the military did I find that I had diabetes and had lost most of my hearing. Having diabetes has caused me to plan better for events to take better care of myself when necessary. With a significant hearing loss, hearing aids have helped me hear what others are saying. Having diabetes and hearing loss has also made working at my current job challenging.

As did Forrest Gump, I had also experienced life through experiential learning during my service in the military and later when I separated from the military. The military was the first time living on my own. I learned how to live at different military bases and perform as a firefighter and 911 dispatcher. I was stationed at three temporary bases and three permanent bases. After separating from the military, I stayed in the same area and bought my first home with my first mortgage. I continued going back to school for my master's while working at the same military base. I continued school though I earned the lowest pay grade for my job then.

Regardless of the age of prison students, students come to my class with various backgrounds. Teachers who work in all-male prisons do not know what these students bring until we can interview them in class or in private. We can determine if we can use this information to help these students reach their personal goals. While teaching, I have been known to use an example from a student's past to help them understand a concept being taught in class.

If possible, sometimes teachers are unable to relate to their students. Another student would jump in and help connect to another student, which sometimes does help.

As a future educator, I will continue using any or all these models to determine what students have experienced to use this information to help students understand what they need to know. I may not be able to use this on the younger generation as they may not have the life experience that will allow me to help them. As they are young adults with little life experience, I can at least determine if they have experienced self-directed learning to make it easier for them to learn independently.

Interview

The person I interviewed is an inmate at a federal prison. I have determined that the information that I obtained revealed that this inmate has only experienced two learning models, experiential and self-directed. Much of his academic learning occurred outside of college as he never attended formal schooling. Most of what he learned on his own was self-directed. He never went to college; he began working for a bank company from scratch, learning all the basics of counting money, from withdrawing to depositing money for customers. He was a bank teller for some years, learning how to deal with customers and the banking business. Years later, he decided he wanted to do more for others by providing bank loans. He learned and later developed a bad habit of stealing money from these loans for himself in offering bank loans. At first, he thought that he could get away with it. It was not until some of his clients complained, and he was arrested.

This inmate also demonstrated experiential learning now that he is in his early 60s. It was not until he had been in prison that he woke up and realized what he had done and that it was too late to change anything about himself to get out of prison. Based on what he learned in

prison, he wished he could start over again. He commented that he wished he had not helped all those clients who treated him poorly.

Not everyone will experience the three learning models, transformational, experiential, and self-directed learning. From what I have learned, depending on a person's age and what they have gone through in life, they can experience all three models. Most likely, the least that anyone can experience is just one mode, self-direct learning, as they are beginning to learn independently. If the person wishes to, they can experience self-directed learning if they want to learn independently, with the help of others. If a person lives long enough, they will probably experience experiential learning. They will most likely encounter many life changes that could help them learn how to deal with the many aspects of life. If they experience transformational learning, they will probably learn from family, friends, and employers.

As an adult educator, I have learned that each student has experienced life in one form or another. This experience would depend on their age and what they have experienced for themselves in life. To help students continue to learn, I could determine what learning models each student has endured. Each model is a pathway that students have learned to accommodate all their experiences. Or there is a particular learning path in such a way to help these students understand what has happened to them to become successful in their own goals.

Critical Theory, Postmodern, and Feminist Perspectives

In this paper, I analyze a diverse class environment and describe how I would teach that class. I discuss what cultural identity theories I would use to better communicate with the diverse class. I also discuss how my understanding of the three theories informed my thinking as an adult learner and adult educator.

Before I plan to walk into the diverse classroom on the first day, I need to prepare myself mentally. I would have copies of the syllabus and worksheets of what the students would need to work on that day. To make a great first impression on my first day, I would be dressed up and well-groomed. When I arrive in the classroom, I would write my name and what I plan to accomplish with the class on the board. If the class is already in conversation with others, I would slowly walk around and begin talking to the students to calm them down. At the same time, I would pass out the class assignment. Once I have their attention and have passed out the assignment, I would introduce myself, discuss the syllabus and answer any questions. I would then explain the assignment's purpose and have them begin it. While they are working on the assignment, I would take roll. Once all the students are done, I would introduce myself again and share something interesting about myself. I would then randomly pick a student to do the same until all the students contributed.

Because it is a diverse class, I would immediately have some assumptions about this class. I would assume they will be a complex group to handle as they are loud, obnoxious, full of energy, and certain students may act a certain way. Being a mixed group, I will have a hard time getting them to do what I ask. Though it is a college class setting, they may not be as bad as high school students. They may be a more mature group and ready to learn and take notes. They probably signed up for this class as required or wanted it. As they are probably new to college, they will not be as bright as the older adult students. Another assumption that I would assume is

that I can take care of everything; they won't misbehave, and I can speak their language. Some of the students most likely will be biased among others in the group, assuming there are significant differences between the two groups. They may think they are better than the others and the teacher. I also would assume that there are Spanish-speaking students, and, therefore, I would need to ask them to pair up with any bilingual (Spanish and English speaking) students.

It is vital to challenge our assumptions when interacting with or instructing people different from us. Assuming assumptions without realizing their full potential can be completely inappropriate about someone or something. Teachers need to investigate their beliefs to make students feel more comfortable about their views (Clauss, 2022). Though the instructor is considered the leading authority in the subject being taught, parts of the subject matter being taught can be erroneous. Since students' learning comes in part from textbooks, it is also assumed that textbooks are perfect. Both teacher instruction and learning materials can be inaccurate and contain mistakes.

Students have the right to challenge the subject matter if they might notice any mistakes. They can also challenge the teachers to ensure that mistakes and old assumptions are corrected during any class discussions. Teachers also have the right to challenge students and their textbooks to ensure they understand the correct assumptions and information. A teacher's authority should not be assumed to always be the correct one.

Clauss (2022) explained that everyone, including teachers and students, makes mistakes when investigating a situation to determine how to handle or interpret it. Without any other information, the wrong assumption could be taken as the final decision, and the final product could be disastrous.

It is necessary for teachers to critically examine race, class, and gender issues when working with adult learners. If teachers are not self-consciously aware of these possible issues before entering their classrooms, they will most likely have trust issues with their students at the start. The trust automatically assumed in the teacher can become misplaced by the students (Laureate Education, 2011c). Teachers need to also understand the culture of their classes. They need to understand they are not part of that culture. The class has their own language and a whole way of relating to themselves. The instructor needs to know that they can be a welcomed visitor if the students allow them into their culture; the teacher can never assume that they will automatically be accepted into their group (Laureate Education, 2011c).

Since this class can be composed of any age group, including those students over 50 years of age, I could consider the critical theory in teaching my class. I could consider applying a geragogy curriculum for this class (Formosa, 2010). Programs for these students would have to include opportunities where they could self-knowingly assess their own lives and experiences (Formosa, 2010). As this class can be a mix of an older and younger generation, this older generation may display critical pedagogy as they may not be able to tolerate the younger generation's attitudes (Zorrilla & Tisdell, 2016). I would have to consider that this older group may not be able to sit in class for any length of time, listen and tolerate the attitudes and behaviors of the younger generation in the class. At the same time, this older population may have already experienced or is still participating in public pedagogy as they may have been to school on the outside for some time (Sandlin et al., 2011).

As this class is very diverse, it is possible that postmodernist views could be taught in this class. This class can be a mixture of males and females, various age groups, backgrounds, cultures, and education. These students would bring attitudes that could demonstrate skepticism

and challenge the curriculum (Giroux, 2006/2016). These students have the right to question what the instructor knows of the course and how the teacher presents the material to help the students understand the material. Pietrykowski (1996) explained that students could question what information is considered valid, authentic, or correct in the class. Overall, postmodernism can leave two views, a pessimistic, negative assessment, or where adult education can play a significant role (Rosenau, 1992). As a teacher, I need to be prepared to challenge these students in a good way and explain the content so that they will understand the results.

This class can also be composed of female students with their own teaching and learning ideas. Teachers could use the feminist pedagogy to include activism, caring, and a safe environment (Lee & Johnson-Bailey, 2004). According to Crabtree et al., (2009), teachers would need to use care in their instruction when using this approach. Teachers see their students as individuals and want to help them connect their classroom learning to their personal experiences. A non-hierarchical relationship would need to be developed with their students. Collaboration is encouraged where the teacher and students can discuss the syllabus and learning of contracts. Social action is part of the class where assignments could include service-learning or feminist action research.

In preparing to teach a class, it is imperative that teachers learn how to approach and lead a diverse class environment. To successfully introduce a lesson, teachers need to understand what their student demographic is of the classroom. Most classrooms are composed of various students who come from a variety of backgrounds and education. To successfully teach students, educators need to understand their students and their experiences. They can use the students' experiences and education to develop programs to better help students understand what they already know about their cultural identity and how to use this to understand others better.

Non-Western Perspectives

In this paper, I describe my perspectives and beliefs as an adult educator compared to those of Confucian, Hindu, Maori, Islamic, and African cultures. I explain why understanding and being sensitive to non-Western perspectives enable me to understand myself as an adult learner better. I also describe how these other cultures support the learning of adults.

It is best to learn of as many cultures as possible while comparing them to our own culture to learn of them. According to Reagan (2018), we do all this to magnify our understanding of learning and knowing. By exposing ourselves to other cultures, we reconsider our purposes as educators to engage students in interpreting the source of knowledge (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). We also consider other means of knowing. It helps us examine how knowledge is produced, whose interests are being provided by this knowledge, and how knowledge comes to be official (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Becoming familiar with knowledge of other cultures is the benefit of this knowledge and its effect on our practice with learners having other than Western worldviews (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). We also view different cultures to understand how teachers can incorporate them into course outcomes. And lastly, we will be personally enhanced (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

Confucius' way of education involved all types of people that could be educated. The rapid development of private schools provided education diversity for ambitious people (Zhang, 2008). Teachers were regarded as a source of knowledge and students as receivers. The adult learning process is highly complex that involves commitment, continuous effort, and a whole approach (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). It consists in learning on one's own and working with others (Sung, 1991a). According to Merriam and Baumgartner (2020), adult learning involves becoming fully human through self-improvement and spiritual study. Its

learners constructed it by working together with nature. It stressed internal assimilation of self and nature. The purpose of the process is to enlighten people, love the people, and rest in the highest distinction. To do this, one must investigate things, extend the knowledge, have a will of authenticity, restore the mind, cultivate one's personal life, regulate one's family, and possess national order and world peace. Overall, teachers must wait until adult learners understand themselves, then teachers must again help learners understand through individual learning.

Confucius's way of education appears to coincide with my philosophy of education. Everyone has the right to the best education in any field, regardless of their age and how one can afford the programs. There are many programs and methods available for students to decide which is best for them. These programs range from getting a GED to earning an associate's, bachelor's, master's, and eventually a doctoral degree. Students can also choose a vocational education. We can also choose from the traditional form of instruction where we sit in class and verbally participate. This form is normally available in all college degree programs. We can now take advantage of online instruction where we can participate in programs entirely through the internet. Instead of physically sitting in class, we can log into the computer and never see or verbally talk to the teacher or the students. Assignments are turned in electronically where there is even proof that assignments and discussions took place. Unfortunately, the student must know how to type discussions and assignments. They must also be motivated enough to log on and participate in their classes. And if the power goes out, so does the internet and schoolwork.

The Hindu's (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020) view of life involves intellect and spirituality that creates individuals who view learning and develop knowledge not just to acquire a skill and facts but to become unified beings. The association between teacher and student is considered sacred and respected. Their code of life involves a social and ethical relations

philosophy that offers spiritual strength. Their education involves an oral history. This education includes karma, a value and belief of Hinduism, religious scriptures, and telling tales. They also share lessons through dance and music that also keep Hinduism alive. They strive to discover themselves, the only means and path to liberation and wisdom. This is not the end of their spiritual journey but a stepping-stone to gaining a more holistic understanding of the universe. The Hindus argue that true empowerment emerges through knowledge, not just its components, leading to unity with the universe. The Hindu life is about developing wisdom through holistically understanding oneself. The learner continually strives to understand the larger picture and its connection to the universe.

I partially agree with the Hindu educational system. Learning comes from what relationship exists between the student and teacher. We do not entirely consider our education sacred. The relationship between the student and teacher will determine the respect deemed for the teacher. For what is required in the classroom, any oral activities between the teacher and student can be considered oral history. Some students decide not to finish high school and stop there. For others, some will get their GED. The rest of these students may choose to continue college and earn a degree. Other students may gain wisdom by earning advanced degrees and working professionally.

Merriam and Baumgartner (2020) explain the Maori way of adult education. Their people are central in adult education which is central to any living activity. The people of Maori make serious efforts to reclaim political, economic, and educational independence. For the Maorians, knowledge is unevenly distributed, though highly respected. Some of it is sacred and controlled traditionally by experts. Much of their knowledge is constructed and supported through consumer gatherings and socialization. The expertise they acquire is always in

collective individuals. It is defined and constructed by the Maorians for the Maorians and learned in culturally appropriate ways. A lifelong education system, which consists of Maori education institutions, is established by Maori and assisted to a modest extent by the public. School managers make all the required decisions within and for the institution. Teaching and learning are connected to the real lives of Maori, conscious of their life circumstances.

Maori's way of obtaining an adult education coincides with my philosophy of education. The various departments of their institution control their education system. Each department hires its faculty of experts in their fields. These departments hold meetings to determine updated curriculum and possible class changes. Teaching and learning are part of preparing students to become successful in life.

The people of Africa (Magagula & Maziboku, 2004; Mautle, 2001; Morolong, 1996) consider their education and learning to have specific principles, methods, and social institutions to foster understanding. To learn is to live usefully and happily with one's family, community, society, and the spirits of one's ancestors. Education is supposed to help people reach the highest level of important societal values or, what they consider as, humanism. By being human, the individual becomes part of an energized group of honest people, accepting and sharing, saving lives at all costs, and respecting the young and the old. The learned knowledge is generated by observing the local environment, experimenting with answers, and readopting previously identified keys to changing environmental factors. Acquiring knowledge encourages participatory education through ceremonies and rituals, spiritual work, recreation work, and intellectual training such as storytelling and poetry. Knowledge is stored in cultural and religious beliefs, taboos, folklore, or myths and an individual's practical experience.

My educational beliefs are somewhat in alignment with the African people. I feel that education is a big deal in one's life, but at the same time, only that person can determine what makes them happy. One must be able to decide what can make them happy. Sometimes this journey is impossible to decide on from the beginning. It can usually take some life experience to figure out what makes someone happy. Some feel that they need to find themselves by working and seeing what kind of work makes them feel that they contribute to society. To work at the highest level and gain that respect, one must determine how to get there. Sometimes it may take extra education and money to earn that level. Working with others in this education system can eventually earn respect.

Narrative Learning

In this paper, I discussed a story from my life and how it affected me in my adult life. I examined the extent these narrative stories had in adult learning. I also studied narrative education in my practice as an adult educator.

For this narrative learning project, I choose to write about how I learned of my family history and how I conducted my family genealogy. For over twenty years, I found that I have been the only person on my father's side of the family who has researched all repositories in town, interviewed family members, and written my family's history. Before I started my research, I had heard stories of how big my family was on my father's side. There were stories of everyone visiting my grandmother at her residence and visiting others in Leavenworth, Kansas, who was also born and raised there. The strange part was that there are no stories of her parents, who were both born in Ireland. Unfortunately, by the time I had gained an interest in my family history, my grandmother had passed years before I would begin researching my history. I would later learn that the only family narratives I could recollect were from everyone who had gathered to visit each other and my grandmother (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Some of these members provided their narratives or accounts of their lives (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). By working with my family members to gather more information, I learned that I used family engagement to collect information for my history (Lave & Wenger, 1991). I would ask specific questions about my great-grandparents in hopes that someone would remember. These stories are considered my narrative learning as I was learning through their stories (Clark, 2001). The remainder of this history involved researching at the local library, cemeteries, hiring researchers, and through the internet. My research continued collecting more life narratives as these are nostalgic and constantly evolving (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020).

In collecting my family history, which was composed of individual stories, and researching many repositories in town, I learned more about my family history than I thought and how I was related to these stories. The stories that I was able to collect, or storying, helped me understand my family history. According to Rossiter and Clark (2007), storying is a learning process. In this learning process, I am trying to figure out how all these stories relate to me as I narrate them. Though I was never around at that time, it was not easy to understand how to describe these stories in my book to understand them all and translate them, especially to the next generations. When I visited family members, and when a history question came up, some members started engaging in storytelling, exchanging stories, and laughing (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Annotating the stories in a language for the next generations to understand can be difficult, especially if the next generations are not familiar with these stories (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). Since I had never heard of most of these stories, I would get very excited and take mental notes.

I included my autobiography as part of my family history (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The purpose of this autobiography, or educational biography, was to write about my academic record. This research also included how I learned about my past (Dominice, 2000). In this process, I wrote about who I am, what I accomplished in my life, my connections to my family history, and how I descended from my ancestors. I also wrote about my reflections on what I learned about my family history and what more I expect to find out in my research. Educational biography required more of the self than just plain journal writing. It involves unfolding memories, expressions, and finding there are more significant meaning to the level that the activity expands on the individual's knowledge of themself and the world (Karpiak, 2000).

As I conducted my family history research and its connection to myself, I found I was the only person conducting our tree research and what my family was all about. As I have been conducting my family research practically all by myself, I was involved in adult development and transformational learning (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). My research seemed to have affected me intellectually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. As Randall (1996) describes transformational learning, this is a process of storying. As I interviewed more family members and conducted more research, I learned how big my family was and how much history is involved in my family. My analysis indicated that I descend from and am connected to military members since the Civil War. They are all also, what I would consider, just average working-class family members. Most of my family did not graduate from high school but did join the military. For years, I have reflected on my connection with all the history I have found. This reflection is an example of the constructivist learning theory, where I reflect on the relationships I discover to my experience (Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). The narrative learning theory provides a closer connection between the learner, me, and their experience, family research data collection, where the process of narrating, explaining what data has been found, is how learners give meaning to their experience (Rossiter & Clark, 2007).

As conducting family research is a way for adult learners to learn of their family history, there are other avenues to use narrative learning. In the religious services department of my job at the prison, inmates are using journals to annotate their narrative experiences in preparing for their future. Some of these inmates join specific religious programs that require them to maintain journals. They explain what they had done wrong in their lives and how they can correct these behaviors. Keeping these journals allows them to qualify for specific early release programs. Some of these same inmates are GED students. They would participate in narrative

learning as they usually come in and ask questions about what to expect when they are released

from prison. I would ask them about what skills they already have and how they could use these

skills on the outside. They would ask me what is outside of the prison we are serving. I would

inform them that several employers ask for help in all jobs.

Reflection

       After reflecting upon myself over the years, I would consider myself a lifelong learner. For adults to become and continue to be successful, we must continuously learn to improve ourselves. It is not enough to just simply acquire knowledge. One must know how to use the knowledge and integrate it into our daily lives based on its relevance to the many changing situations we experience (Su, 2011).

       During the week of Synthesis of Learning Theories, what impacted me the most was how community of inquiry, connectivism, and collaborativism are used in adult learning. As a family tree researcher, I am constantly accidentally finding documents that I have never seen before. They need to be researched more to determine their meaning, an example of community of inquiry (Garrison, 2017). After some time, the mystery has been solved. As an example of connectivism, I research the internet at work to find updated math worksheets and determine if the information is updated before assimilating them to my students (Siemens, 2005). In collaborativism, some universities may use Facebook, our iPhones, and the university's online sites to conduct online discourses through texting, chatting, forums, webinars, e-mails, and blogs (Magen-Nagar & Shonfeld, 2018). What struck me the most was finding a document that I would need for my tree research by accident and not quite knowing its meaning. After some investigation, I would wake up and realize it is the most important document to make my work so relevant.

       During the week of Adult Development and Learning, what impacted me the most was what issues affected my development to adult learning. My biological changes included being a type 2 diabetic, having some hearing loss (Davis et al., 2016), and worsening my vision (Harsen, 2009; Merriam & Baumgartner, 2020). My psychological changes included having issues with

identity vs. role confusion in my early adulthood, what I was or was not allowed to do at home. During intimacy vs. isolation, I was trying to decide what would be best for me in my later life. The Levinson's Age-Graded Model (Levinson & Levinson, 1996) involved my family losses, having many occupations, and forming and still have some friendships. My sociocultural issues included my social roles in joining the military and enrolling in the G.I. Bill, purchasing my first home with my first mortgage, becoming a professional student in earning my master's and doctoral degrees, and finally becoming a teacher.

During the week of Wisdom, what impacted me the most was how wisdom has affected my development of adult learning. Though I would consider myself highly educated with a master's and doctoral degrees, I have at times felt intimidated by what research I find and how I have difficulty understanding the information I read (Laureate Education, 2011b). As I am of advanced age, having had many occupations over the years, am highly educated, and have worked with many progressive individuals, I would consider myself wise.

During the week of Self-Report and Interview, what impacted me the most about self-reporting and interviewing is how they affected my development of adult learning. I experienced transformational learning when I lost many family members and had to learn how to deal with these losses. I have had to deal with medical issues that include being a diabetic, having major hearing loss, and vision problems. I had to plan my instruction around these challenges. I experienced experiential learning when I joined the military and was stationed at various military bases while performing my job as a firefighter and 911 dispatcher. I also experienced self-directed learning as a full-time online doctoral student. This was a major experience for me as I could attend classes online anytime without having to change my life schedule.

During the week of Critical Theory, Postmodern, and Feminist Perspectives, what impacted me most was how these perspectives affected my adult learning. I found that I could use critical theory for a class that was over 50 years of age (Formosa, 2010). A geragogy curriculum could help these adults self-knowingly assess their own lives and experiences. A postmodernist approach could demonstrate skepticism and challenge curriculums (Giroux, 2006/2016). A feminist pedagogy would need a teacher's care during instruction and connect their classroom learning to their students' personal experiences (Crabtree et al., 2009).

During the week of Non-Western Perspectives, what impacted me the most was how teachers should consider magnifying their understanding of learning and knowing, especially of other cultures (Reagan, 2018). We should expose ourselves to other cultures to reconsider our purposes as educators to better engage our students to learn and know more about other cultures (Semali & Kincheloe, 1999). We should also view these cultures so that we can have a better understanding so that we can incorporate them into our course outcomes.

As an adult learner, I found that there are a variety of theories and perspectives that can help us learn more about ourselves and others. As we develop into adult learners, each student has their own biological, psychological, and sociocultural experiences as to what could affect how they learn of themselves and others. Having earned years of education and work experience can help us better understand ourselves and others. As adult learners, we can learn how we use experiential learning, transformational learning, and self-directed learning to develop into our own individualism. Being a student, we can also learn how critical theory, postmodernism, and feminist perspectives can assist us to better understand each other.

As an adult educator, I can use a variety of theories and perspectives to help us learn more about how our students learn. Educators can learn how their students develop around their learning environments due to their own biological, psychological, and sociocultural experiences. Not all students have the same backgrounds or experiences; we would need to assess them to determine what they have and how we can use this to improve their lives and ourselves. We could also determine what type of learning, transformational, experiential, or self-directed, would benefit each student. As adult educators, we could also determine which approach or approaches, critical theory, postmodernist, or feminist, would benefit our students' development.

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